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## BRIEF MENTION

*The Battle of the Books in its Historical Setting*, by Anne Elizabeth Burlingame; Introduction by James Harvey Robinson (New York, B. W. Huebsch, 1920, pp. x + 225). This volume and Dr. Jones's essay, noticed in the preceding number of this periodical, are of the same date but altogether independent of each other. The common subject is independently studied with much that is common in purpose, that of showing its reaches back into the history of culture. Two serious expounders of the deeper significance of the 'quarrel' have thus simultaneously been moved to rescue this subject from a superficial judgment more or less general and traditional.

Professor Robinson in a brief Introduction indorses the book with a characterization of its theme, "a long conflict for liberty," the escape from the thralldom of classical literature, "the first great conscious conflict between the Old and the New, . . . the instructive beginning of a process which must in the nature of things go on for a long time to come, until, at last, men's minds may grow really free to accommodate themselves readily and joyfully to the Ever-new." Following the order of the three divisions of the book he epitomizes the successive steps of the "long conflict," keeping the problem comprehensive of all learning until it becomes finally more or less narrowed to "the supremacy of the Ancients in poesy and oratory."

The 'background' of the controversy is now interpreted to embrace the cultural history of the medieval period. A sketch of that history is therefore drawn in the 'Introductory Chapter' (pp. 3-39). After the barest outlines of significant movements, showing appreciative dependence on her authorities, Miss Burlingame enters upon the more direct approaches of the argument by devoting the second half of the chapter to a study chiefly of Erasmus and Montaigne. In his educational theory Erasmus, the self-styled "citizen of the world" had progress in view, but in his conception of progress "its source lay wholly in the ancient past. . . . Sane classical culture, free from taint of sectionalism, must be conjoined with modern life." He lamented secular ignorance and contended for a free Bible; but in consequence of his steadfast look into the past for inspiration, he would have Latin to become a living tongue. He has no inspiring vision of a cultivated vernacular, and "he failed to grasp the significance of science, or to realize that in the fresh observation of nature lay the key to growth" (p. 24).

If Erasmus hoped for the future with his face turned to the past, his distinguished contemporary Vives (whose great learning was generously acknowledged by Erasmus) looked steadfastly into

the future, and regarded the study and cultivation of the vernacular languages in the light of a nation's primary obligation and means of progress. It is also very pertinent to the history of the 'quarrel' to quote his comment on the giant and dwarf figure, which already in his day was somewhat trite: "For it is a false and fond similitude, which some writers adopt, though they think it witty and suitable, that we are, compared with the ancients, as dwarfs upon the shoulders of the giants" (Foster Watson, *Vives: On Education*, Cambridge, 1913, p. cv). Bacon incurred obligations to Vives, and is also supposed by Mr. Watson to have known Robert Ashley's *Interchangeable Course of Things*, 1594, a translation from Louis Le Roy. It contains this characteristic statement: "we ought by our own inventions to augment the doctrine of the Ancients.". Miss Burlingame and Dr. Jones have both entirely overlooked Vives, whom Mr. Watson has so competently restored to his rightful place in the history of education.

In spite of an extraordinary training in Latin (nor did the training of the precocious William Wotton secure an inflexible advocate of the classics), Montaigne's educational attitude was peculiarly modern. By nature impatient of pedantry and tolerant of what is free, universal, unpretentious, and non-partisan in life, he was not detached from antiquity, but, accepting it in his light, generalizing manner, gave it a place in the continuous history of human endeavor: "We judge them as we judge ourselves." For him "there is no isolated Past." He re-acted from his own early experience and urged that in education the modern languages should precede the ancient, and approved "the translation of classical works into the vernacular." His modernity was restricted, however, by his disapproval of rendering the Bible "fit for the people's handling by translating it into the vulgar tongue." Modern he was, with reservations instinctively unfavorable to innovations; to him "the reform of the calendar is an irritation," and it is foolish to boast "of the invention of artillery and printing" known "in China a thousand years ago." This last detail illustrates how far Montaigne remained behind Bacon in finding a constructive view of progress, for Bacon declared, "nor do I think that it matters . . . to the business in hand whether the discoveries that shall now be made were long ago known to the Ancients" (p. 203, note 34).

It is broadly defensible to regard the controversy that ultimately evoked Swift's satire as having its roots in medieval philosophy, science, and educational theory, and Miss Burlingame's sketchy review of its assumed early stages cannot but stimulate coherent study of cultural movements. What is lacking in the review will however be perceived to be a reckoning with the concurrent growth and influence of the vernacular literature. But the controversy in its specific character begins not with the first Bacon but rather with the second.

The interval between the two is, of course, fraught with the positive and negative forces that in the end effected a fresh and indomitable attitude to an old subject.

The specific history of the controversy, toward which the way has been paved by the "Introductory Chapter," is now traced in the two principal divisions of the book: "The Scientific Phase," and "The Literary Phase" (in two chapters). It is a specific history with a definite beginning. The time had come for a new formula of progress, a formula that would answer much questioning of preceding generations and provide for more complete intellectual satisfactions. In the words of Miss Burlingame, "The time was ripe for the messenger of this great change. The scientific achievements of Copernicus, of Galileo, of Bruno, of Harvey and Kepler [and why not Gilbert?] had stirred men's blood and given promise of new mastery of physical law. . . . Although the full significance of science had not yet impressed men's minds, its ferment was stimulating their thought. . . . It is Francis Bacon of a truth who becomes the trumpeter of this change; for it is he who first renders articulate the sense of the continuity of life and progress through science, and of man's capacity for advance step by step." Bacon's attitude to the learning of the past (not overlooking his personal limitations) and his confident hope that learning's "third visitation to men . . . will surpass the Greek and Roman learning" is briefly expounded on the basis of extracts from his works.

Galileo belongs to the new order. By experimentation he "weakened the whole Aristotelian system of mechanics," and thus contributed to the criticism of classical tradition. In a public discourse, moreover, he "directly challenged the Schoolman's deference to Aristotle and the ancient written Word," and proclaims an era of Reality to displace the traditional authority of mere Words. His revolt is fully set forth in his *Dialogo*, from the English translation of which (1661) Miss Burlingame gives pertinent extracts. The Italian author's use of his vernacular has also a significance in the controversy. This "scientific phase" of the controversy is next observed at the hands of Descartes and Hobbes. According to the method adopted in this chapter, these philosophers are also allowed to present the salient points of the controversy in their own words. The extracts are well chosen for specific emphasis, and Miss Burlingame's comments are so restrained as not to diminish the force of that emphasis. Altho disclosing nothing new, this survey of one of the most important periods in the history of the mind's attitude to authenticity in knowledge has been made with a freshness of enthusiasm that is communicable to the general student and gives it a recognizable value. Comparing the book with the essay one finds that the same conclusion has been reached by a different selection of witnesses; but it remains a surprise that Miss Burlingame has not

availed herself of Sprat's testimony. Hakewill and Guthkelch (specially important for bibliography) are also names that would have been suggested by Dr. Jones's 'list of books.' In her interpretation of the state of the controversy preceding Temple, Miss Burlingame differs from Dr. Jones in assuming that only "one phase of classical literature remained intact. . . . Poetry and Oratory still reigned." The issue remained more complex than that as is proved by the character of the details maintained in the arguments of the 'literary' quarrel, as Dr. Jones has shown, tho not with all possible completeness.

The second half of the book (pp. 103-195) is devoted to a survey of "The Literary Phase," that aspect of the controversy which is strikingly engaging and in particular respects profoundly significant, even when not completely considered in its long backward reaches. The continuity of the controversy is of course acknowledged in essential agreement with Dr. Jones: "Beginning in England with the more general discussion of Glanvil and Stubbs, it culminated in the famous Battle of the Books between Bentley and Boyle. In France, taking the form of a revolt against the canons of taste established by the French Academy, the contest raged around Perrault and Fontenelle." The national features are distinguished: "In France the movement, although fundamentally the same, had a different surface aspect. . . . Classical standards were absolute. . . . Thus the revolt . . . seems a natural reaction against the tyranny of form" (p. 105). Descartes prepared France to break "the spell of the classics in Philosophy and Science," and yet "when France was repudiating the old authorities in Metaphysics and Physics, she was in Poetry and Oratory placing herself under the dominion of that literary regime designated later as the Classical Era of Louis Fourteenth. The same period which witnessed the foundation of the French Academy of Sciences, saw also the culmination of the work of Boileau, of Racine, of Molière" (p. 155). The national sides of the quarrel now determine the order of the discussion. Temple, Wotton, Bentley, and Swift, are the topics first treated; then follows a division with these titles: "The French Point of View as Compared with the English, Charles Perrault, Fontenelle, Conclusion." The story is familiar and the records are accessible. These facts do not, however, deprive the book of a goodly share of fresh interest, for Miss Burlingame has studied the events with commendable insight and interpretative skill, and her treatise together with the essay by Dr. Jones will lead, one must believe, to a renewal of reflections upon the entire controversy.

In its profoundest significance the controversy is not an historic event now completely detached from educational theory. It involves questions that have continued in dispute and are today considered in re-determinations of the content of the curricula of the schools and in definitions of intellectual culture. The publications of the

U. S. Bureau of Education and the records of the universities and colleges contain the nineteenth century history of the gradual admission of the natural sciences into the courses of higher education, a history which must amaze the present generation. And the educationist is at present, according to temperament, arguing on one or the other side of some form, tho greatly changed in its general aspects, of the old controversy between the ancients and the moderns.

In an obvious sense the controversy under consideration roots in the philosophic tenet that distinguishes science from art and is therefore a constant factor in the problem of progress. Art is relatively static, and attains in its products a certain finality; science is in motion, and attained positions are its stepping-stones. A not very remote analogy to this contrast is in the relation of the essence of the spiritual life to shifting dogma. But the analogy must not be misconstrued so as to obscure the fact that science supplies the elements for progress in art. Not to lose the 'controversy' in abstractions, one perceives on its literary side that the eyes of the classicist could be blinded to the finality of art in whatever age of the world, and that the modernist, in recognizing merit in vernacular productions, did not impugn the endurable qualities in what by their opponents was held to be unapproachably superior.

The limits of this notice exclude even the briefest comment on all the differences of emphasis between the book and the essay thruout the report of the last stage of the controversy. But one must mention Dr. Jones's stronger emphasis on Temple's relation to Burnet,—a cardinal point in his special argument. Moreover, Dr. Jones pays more attention to the temperamental outfit of the disputants,—a factor at all times of more or less determining force in a discussion of this character. And Miss Burlingame alone attempts an adequate reckoning with *A Tale of a Tub*.

In conclusion one point more may be noticed, for it relates to a judgment that is to be questioned. Miss Burlingame presses her argument to an apex in extolling the merits and influence of Swift's satire. Now, satire is an inferior form of literature. It usually attains comic and entertaining effects by caricature, burlesque and ridicule, and that too by a capricious and irresponsible attitude to underlying truths and principles. With these features made prominent it is not a form adapted to a sound philosophic discussion of such problems as were involved in the "controversy," and Swift did not release the form from those less seriously and permanently effective characteristics.

It is to be added that an important volume (agreeing in date with the book and the essay) is now accessible, containing *A Tale of A Tub* and *The Battle of the Books*, together with pertinent pieces, edited, with an Introduction and Notes, by Guthkelch and D. Nichol Smith (Clarendon Press).

J. W. B.